

*The Great Happiness of finishing our Christian
Course with Joy.*

A
S E R M O N,
PREACHED BEFORE THE
C L E R G Y,
A T T H E
VISITATION held at RICHMOND,
MAY 30. 1763.

By the Rev. WILLIAM COOPER, A.M.
Rector of KIRBY-WISK in YORKSHIRE, and late Fellow of
TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Published at the Request of the CLERGY.

L O N D O N:
Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in Pall-Mall.
MDCCLXIII,

The Great Highway of the Christian Church
Caus'd with Joy

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To the Right Reverend Father in God

E D M U N D,

Lord Bishop of CHESTER.

My LORD,

THE following Discourse is *offered* to the Public,
at the *Request* and *Sollicitation* of the CLERGY,
which belong to that *Diocese*, over which your Lordship
so *deservedly* presides. If therefore it should *contribute*, in
some degree, to *quicken* the Diligence of *Those*, who are
appointed to the "Work of the Ministry," and should
raise in them a Concern, equal to the *Interest* which
they have at *Stake*, my most *Ardent Wishes* are suffi-
ciently *answered*.

I am, My LORD,

Your Lordship's most devoted,

and most Faithful Servant,

Kirby-Wisik,
June 10, 1763.

William Cooper.

To the Right Reverend Father in God

E D M U N D

Lord Bishop of Chester.

My Lord,

THE following Discourse is offered to the Public
as the Essay and Submission of the Clergy,
which belong to that Diocese over which your Lordship
so generously presides. It therefore is thought requisite in
some degree, to manifest the Diligence of Those who are
appointed to the "Work of the Ministry," and should
raise in them a Concern equal to the Interest which
they have at stake; my most Ardent Wishes are sufficient
only expressed.

I am, My Lord,

Your Lordship's most devoted,

and most faithful Servant,

William Cooper.

Long-778.
June 10. 1783.

A C T S XX. Ver. 24.

But none of these Things move me, neither count I my Life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my Course with Joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord JESUS, to testify the Gospel, of the Grace of GOD.

IF we do not, like St. Paul, with unwearied Industry, persevere to the end of the Course which is now set before us, so that we may finish it with Joy, it had been less dishonourable, and much happier for us, if we had never entered into it at all!

This Apostle having summoned together the elders, belonging to the Church which he himself had planted at Ephesus, publicly declares that the Promotion of God's Honour, and the Good of Mankind, had ever been esteemed by him, as his supreme Happiness and Glory.

Yet, that they might not entertain the least Doubt or Suspicion concerning the Veracity of his words, he asserts, and appeals to the [a] Consciences of those who had heard Him for the truth of what He asserts, that his whole Life, even from the very first Day of his Residence there, had not been spent in a Scene of Inactivity, or inglorious Repose, but in a constant and diligent Attention to the various Duties of his no less difficult, than important Office. "Ye know (says he) from the first Day that I came into Asia, after what Manner I have been with you at all

[a] Happy would it be for every Minister of Christ, if he was able with St. Paul to say, Διὸ μαρτύρομαι ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ σήμερον ἡμέρᾳ, ὅτι καθαρὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος πάντων. Οὐ γὰρ ὑπεσιλάμην τῷ μὴ ἀναγγεῖλαι ὑμῖν πᾶσαν τὴν ἐκλήν τῷ Θεῷ. Act. Apost. c. xx. ver. 26, 27.

Seasons,

Seasons, serving the LORD with all Humility of Mind, and with many Tears and Temptations which beset me, by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from House to House, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the *Greeks*, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

Thus having been [b] miraculously converted to *Christianity*, and made a Minister of CHRIST in *Affairs of Religion*, nay, more than that, sent out, as the most proper Person to explain and teach it to the World; we find that he did not go forth into it with a set of Notions, which he was neither able to explain, nor to defend, but on the contrary, that he was upon every Occasion sufficiently prepared, not only to justify himself, but to convince others: to convince them, that the *Doctrines*, which they heard and attended to, were such, and such only as he himself had received, by immediate [c] Revelation from God.

Hence, therefore, with a firmness of Mind hitherto unexampled, he combated the Prejudices of various Sects, bred up in contrary Notions, and indeed resolutely attached to their several Persuasions. In the midst of Tyranny, Oppression, and Persecution, for "none of these things moved him", he boldly taught and demonstrated, that there was but [d] one God; that the Way to please him, was to live well one with another, and to discharge with integrity, the several Duties, both of their natural, and their civil Relation.

In order, therefore, that these important Doctrines might be more universally known, and acknowledged; in order that God might be more universally represented, what in reality he is, just,

[b] ὁ δὲ κύριος ὑμῶν πάλαι, νῦν εὐαγγελίζεσθαι τὴν πίστιν ἣν πάλαι ἐπέθετο. Epist. Galat. c. i. ver. 23.

[c] καὶ ὁ λόγος μου, καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου, καὶ ἐν πείθοις ἀνθρώπων σοφίας λόγους, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως. 1 Cor. c. ii. ver. 4.

[d] Even by *Plato* God is called 'Ο εἷς, and *Seneca* says God is "prima omnium Causa, ex qua cetera pendent."

boly,

holy, merciful and good; Our Apostle planted Churches in [e] various Parts of the World, by which means the Christian Morality daily gained Ground, not only as it evidently appeared to exceed every other System of Morality, but as it naturally discovered a more excellently Supreme Being, than any other Institution, or Religion.

The more serious Part of Mankind, therefore, thus instructed and informed, no longer suffered themselves to be led astray by the seductive Powers of Prejudice or Fashion: They no longer gave up their consciences to the blind Guidance of foolish and illiterate Teachers: They no longer built their Faith on groundless [f] Traditions, in contempt of Virtue, and in opposition to the unerring Dictates of CHRIST's Religion. No! Christianity now appeared in its proper Garb and Vesture! The righteous and true *Jehova* was now worshiped, not with fanatic Raptures or superstitious Ceremonies, in a Way and Manner which he has not commanded, or indeed forbidden; but according to the Beauty of Christian Holiness, according to the divine Simplicity of the Gospel, which commands us above all things, to worship him "in Spirit and in Truth."

Mankind, therefore, were not puzzled and perplexed, with abstruse Speculations, and profound Mysteries, but were taught, in an easy familiar Way, that an implicit Obedience to the Will of God, and an unaffected Attachment to his divine Commands, were the conditions necessary to their Happiness and Salvation: They were taught that to deny the Being of God, was utterly to debase the Nature of Man, "because he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them, that diligently seek him. Lastly, they were taught, that to dread Disgrace, or to shrink under any Oppression or Difficulty, when they

[e] In *Galatia*, a small Province of the Lesser *Asia*, St. Paul planted several distinct Churches. At *Corinth* he converted many to Christianity, although he was opposed by a considerable Faction there. 2 Cor. c. i. ver. 17. His Journey through *Macedonia*, and indeed in all other Places, was attended with equal success.

[f] St. Paul, before his Conversion to Christianity, was extremely zealous of Traditions, *παραδοσιας ζηλωτής*. Ep. Galat. c. i. ver. 14.

were

were permitted to suffer for the [g] Cause of the Blessed JESUS, and in defence of his undefiled Religion, would unavoidably plunge them into everlasting infamy; because God himself ordains the sufferings of good Men, and permits even his most faithful Servants to struggle with all the Calamities, that are incident to human Nature, in order to determine their Affection and Sincerity to him; that thence, according to their Unanimity and Conduct, their Courage and Integrity in this Christian Warfare, he may prepare for them a Crown of Glory, which "fadeth not away, eternal in the Heavens."

Thus the Light of Christianity dispelled, in some Degree, the gross Darknefs, with which the World then was covered; thus it opposed, and weakened the unjust Usurpations of the wayward Will of Man; thus it evidently set forth, what every Christian is concerned far above every other Consideration attentively to regard, viz. the Salvation of his own Soul.

The principal Difficulty therefore of attaining that inestimable piece of Knowledge, did not surely consist in the narrowness of Man's Understanding, but in the original Depravity of his Heart. Certain it is, that the Church of CHRIST was no sooner erected, but it's Interests and Advancement were strongly opposed, both by the unbelieving Jew, and the idolatrous Gentile; both by the Authority of Men in Power, and by the secret Bent of those that were out of Power; it was carried forward, therefore, in direct opposition to Public Fashion and Private Inclination; it reformed the Morals, and raised the Sentiments of a People, who were the most frequent and vehement Declaimers against it: who seemed inflexibly firm and obstinate in their Opinions: jealous at the same time of its increasing Power, and secretly sorry to discern the amazing Force and [b] Rapidity of it's Progress.

[g] ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ πάροιντε διὰ δικαιοσύνην, μακάριοι. 1 Pet. c. iii. ver. 14.

εἰ ὀνειδίζετε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, μακάριοι. 1 Pet. c. iv. ver. 14.

[b] St. Paul triumphs greatly on the wonderful Success of his Preaching, not only at Corinth, but ἐν παντί τόπῳ. Τῷ δὲ Θεῷ χάρις (says he) τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβοῦντι ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ καὶ τῇ δοξῇ τῆς γνώσεως αὐτοῦ φανεῖντι δι' ἡμῶν ἐν παντί τόπῳ. 2 Cor. c. ii. ver. 14.

This Progress however was happily effected, by the heroic Ardour of the first Disciples, and early Propagators of our Faith; who stood forth unarmed, and defenceless, "amidst the Powers of the Prince of this World," and there resolutely maintained their Religion, with no other Weapons than those of Reason, and of Grace; boldly opposing the Truth and the Purity of their Doctrines, to a People sunk deep in Error and Corruption.

Their blessed Lord and Master had already sealed the Redemption of Mankind, by a Death not less cruel than ignominious; he had sufficiently evinced the Truth of his Mission, by a series of Miracles which filled every Beholder with Astonishment, and [i] clearly convinced him, that such Things could not be accomplished but by the immediate interposition and illimited Power of the SON of GOD.

His Disciples, therefore, animated by an Example, so truly noble and illustrious, bravely led on the glorious Opposition to Paganism and Superstition: They remained steadfast, and unmoveable, in the midst of Persecutions, and Perils, and Distresses of every kind. What indeed principally conduced to support them, under the oppressive Severity of their Afflictions, was a firm Belief and Persuasion, that a Religion so pure, so reasonable, and so useful to Mankind, as that which they resolutely endeavoured to establish, must, notwithstanding the various difficulties which it then encountered, at the length become victorious and triumphant.

Are not we then bound, by the strongest Ties of Gratitude and Duty, to pay our most unfeigned Thanks and Adorations to the Almighty Creator of Heaven and Earth; who hath, by Means which he providentially foresaw would prove the most effectual, fulfilled this Prediction? Who hath so far graciously interested himself in our behalf, as entirely to frustrate, and render non-effective, the many perfidious and horrible designs of the truly inveterate and highly incensed Enemies of our Religion; nay,

[i] 'Ο ὁ Ἐξαίρετος καὶ οἱ μὴ αὐτῶν ἡγεῖς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, ἰδοὺς τὸ σῶμα
καὶ τὰ μέλη, ἐπέσθενον ἐφ' ἑαυτοὺς, λέγοντες, Ἄλλως οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἐλπίς. St. Mat.
c. xxvii. ver. 54.

who hath been pleased moreover, not only to strip off, with a most tender and benevolent Hand, those heavy Chains which Tyranny had imposed on us; but hath in the end crowned our most Glorious cause with unexampled success, by giving us the Victory, through Our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

“Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye [k] *stedfast, unmoveable*, always *abounding* in the *Work* of the LORD, so far as ye know that your *Labour* is not in vain in the LORD.”

Forasmuch as ye know, and ought to recollect with the truest Joy and Gratitude, that, although there was indeed a Time when the reigning Powers of this World were firmly combined together for the utter Extirpation of Christianity; a Time, when nothing but the extraordinary Aid of Heaven could possibly have sustained it; yet, that you are now not only free from the Persecutions to which it then was exposed, but are also perfectly secure against every Apprehension of that kind for the future. The Profession of your Faith is now attended not only with Security, but Honour: It is now not merely tolerated, but established: You enjoy the Protection of the wisest Government upon Earth; and under the Dominion of the most amiable and good King, whose uncommon Attachment to the Cause of Christianity, and whose earnest Sollicitude for extending the Practice of it, to even the most distant and remote Parts of the Universe, that we may be all united in one Faith and Communion, that we may be "one Flock under one Shepherd," must unavoidably secure to him, the sincere Love, and inviolable affection of his ever grateful and admiring Subjects.

These Considerations (my Brethren) ought to *fortify* you in your *religious* Perseverance, and cause you to make the *best* Use of the many *considerable* Advantages which you so *happily* possess, by *promoting*, as far as possible, the *Glory* of God, and the *supreme* Happiness of Man.

Your Time then will not perhaps be *misapplied* if you pause here a little, and *attentively* reflect how *widely* different your

[k] *ἀπο τῶν ἡδύποιοι, σὺν αὐτοῖς τὰς ἀγαθὰς αἰσθητικὰς ἀποδόχους.*
2 Theff. c. ii ver. 15.

Profession

Profession is, from that of *other Men*, whether you *consider* either its *Nature*, or its [1] *Dignity*.

Your Business and Employment (a most arduous one indeed!) is not only to discharge all the important Offices, through which you pass, with *Honour* to *yourselves*, but *Benefit* to the *Public*; it is not only to *guard* your various Flocks, against the *Invasions* of an *open*, but also to *defend* them against the *more artful* Insinuations of a *domestic*, Enemy; finally, it is not only to *secure* your *own* Salvation, but to *secure* the Salvation of *every Individual* [m] committed to your Care, by *forming* them for *Eternity*, and by [n] instilling into them those most excellent Precepts, which the Sacred Writings every where unfold.

This your own *Penetration* and *extensive Abilities* will enable you to *perform*; yet *they*, even *they* will not prove *equal* to so *severe* a Task, unless they come *recommended*, not only from your *Lips*, but from your *Lives*: for 'tis a *Truth* not to be *contested*, that a [o] *pious* and *devout* Deportment always proves a much *stronger* Incentive to a *good Life*, than either the *deepest* Reasoning, or the most *alluring* Charms of Eloquence.

In order to *effect* this (which is the *highest* pitch of *Perfection* human Nature is *capable* of arriving at) it is *absolutely* necessary that you *observe* such a *Decorum*, and *keep* such a *Guard* on *yourselves*, as may prevent *even the Suspicion* of your having been *guilty* of *any Action*, which is in itself *wrong* or *improper*; for as

[1] Although some of the Laity are so *base* and *profligate*, as not only to treat the *Clergy*, but their *Profession* with Contempt, yet, in Holy Scripture, they are *highly* honoured and esteemed; they are *there* represented as "*Fellow Workers* with CHRIST; as *Pastors*; as *Stewards* and *Superintendents* of CHRIST's Family; as *Ambassadors*;" and this upon the *noblest* and most *desirable* Message; for *their* Business is to treat of *Peace* between God and Man. See *Burnet's Pastoral Care*, p. 8.

[m] ὡς λόγον ἀποδώσους. Heb. c. xiii. ver. 17.

[n] τὰ τοιαῦτα πρὸς καὶ ἀνδρῶν καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν. 1 Tim. c. iv. ver. 16.

[o] *Piclate* gravem ac *Morinis* si forte *Virum* quem

Conspexere, silent; arrectisque auribus adstant.

Ille regit *dictis* animos, & pectora mulcet. Virg.

τὰ δ' ἀξίωμα

τὸ σὺν πρῶτον. Eurip. Hecuba, p. 41.

the Reality would ruin, so the very Suspicion will lessen you, in the Opinion of your Audience.

When, therefore, you have lived an [p] Example of that Discipline which you daily injoin to others, not more forward to prescribe, than diligent to perform every Thing, that tends to the Promotion of true Religion; the many judicious Observations which you then make concerning the ordinary Transactions of Men, are attentively listened to, and eagerly imbibed; because they are known to come in reality from the Heart; because every one who hears you, is convinced, that your Behaviour is suitable to the Doctrines which you enforce; and that the Integrity of your Morals is answerable to the Purity of your Faith.

Upon the whole: Happy are they who live, under the daily Influence of such inestimable Qualities, and enjoy a constant Opportunity of reaping the many considerable Advantages, which most naturally result from thence.

Happy is he, whose great Advancement in Knowledge, and whose exemplary Conduct of himself, sets him forth as a Pattern of Perfection to the World; who, in religious Matters, does not act for [q] temporal but spiritual Ends; who feels that internal Comfort in his own Breast, which it is not in the Power of external Honors to bestow; and therefore wisely considers his sacred Profession, not merely as an Employment, which is to produce him a competent Subsistence in the World, or which may perhaps one day elevate him, to some Degree of Power, and Dignity in it, but considers it as an Employment, which he has received from God, on the most solemn and awful Terms; an Employment, therefore, which demands his continual Care and Attention; an Employment of the highest Consequence, not only to himself, who professes it, but also to others, whom he is born to instruct, to guide, and to preserve.

The Motives, therefore, to perform the various Duties of our conspicuous Station, as they are high and important in them-

[p] τύποι γενόμενοι τῶ ποιμαίνῃ. 1 Pet. c. v. ver. 3.

περὶ πάντων, σταυρὸν παρεχόμενος, τύπον καλῶν ἔργων. Tit. c. ii. ver. 7.

[q] μηδὲ αἰσχροκέρδως, ἀλλὰ ὑποθιμῶς. 1 Pet. c. v. ver. 2.

selves, so they will receive an *additional* Weight and Force when you consider that your *Ability* or *Inability* to discharge them with *Propriety*, must reduce you to the *unavoidable* Alternative, of becoming the *signal* Object either of *public Esteem*, or *public Disapprobation*.

But this is not all: Your *Inability* to perform them properly in *this* World, will cover you with *perpetual Shame* and *Disbournour* in the next. Nay, the many heinous Sins of *those*, who have been ruined thro' your means, will (when CHRIST JESUS shall come again, to judge of every man, according to his works) be imputed to you, with this terrible Circumstance attending them, that as they *encrease* your *Guilt*, so they will most assuredly *aggravate* your *Condemnation*.

Dreadful Thought indeed! may this Reflection sink deep into our Breasts, and cause us never to stop short of the most *important* End in view, that of "Finishing our Course with Joy;" may we never *misapply* those *Talents* and *Abilities*, which our blessed LORD has *entrusted* us with, or *neglect* the many Opportunities of *Salvation*, which GOD now affords us, lest they should one Day rise up in *Judgment* against us, and *condemn* us.

Disputes and *Controversies* in Religion were not *uncommon*, even in the *earliest* and *purest* Times of the Gospel; to obviate therefore the *Arts* of *wicked* Men, to arm *weak* Minds against their *Seductions*, is as much the *Business* of the Pulpit as any other Part of our Duty: none more *useful*: none more *necessary*: because [r] *unreasonable* Men every Day arise, speaking *perverse* Things, to *draw away* Disciples after them.

A mad [s] *Whitfield*, and a fanatic *Wesley* have already *violated* the *Peace* of Mankind, by a *Schismatical* Division from the

[r] λύκοι βαρεῖς, μὴ φειδόμενοι τῶ ποιμανία. Act. Apost.

[s] *Whitfield* and *Wesley* attract the *Attention* of the People, because *what* they say, they repeat *extempore*. Hence, the mad brained *Henley* had his *Followers*. The judicious Mr. *Sheridan* (to whom the *English Nation* stands much obliged for his admirable Course of *Lectures* on *Elocution*, and other excellent Tracts) has the following *just* observation: "Were the *Methodist* Teachers, says he, to read their *Nonsense* in the same *cold* artificial Manner, that so many of the Clergy deliver *rational* Discourses, it is to be presumed,

that

the *Established Church*; and have yet by *another*, and a more enormous Violation of it, thrown out the most *scurrilous* Invectives against *those*, whose *extensive* Learning, and whose *unquestionable* Reputation, in their *high* Calling, none dare dispute; Yet, notwithstanding their *magnanimous* Efforts to *defame* and *molest* us, they *merit* indeed our *Pity* rather than our *Resentment*. For whoever *calmly* and *candidly* observes the *nice* Conduct of these *truly* judicious and *highly* illuminated Doctors, will not surely *scruple*, on the most *mature* Deliberation, to *confess*, that in the *Dispensation* of their Ministry, they *aggravate* the *least* Indiscretion of their *Enemies*, whilst, at the same time, they are *ever* ready to *extenuate* the *worst* Prevarications of their Friends. Unsettled to any one Point of View, they perpetually *roam* about the *Globe*, and, in order to attract the *Attention* of Mankind, they produce *whole* Rhapsodies of *unmeaning* Jargon, which, in their *extatic* Fits, they *recommend* to their *deluded* Auditory, by the most *extravagant* Gestures and *unnatural* Emotions, during which the *poor* Creatures are *taught* to believe, that *these* Emotions are the *Language* of the *Spirit*, and that *Inspiration* implies the *most* perfect Eloquence.

The *Life* and *Faculties* of Man, at the best but *short* and *limited*, cannot surely be employed *more* rationally, or *laudably*, than in *detecting* such *Impostures* as *these*, and *exposing* them, in a *proper* Light, to the Eye of the World, that *others* may be *enabled* to see into the *Absurdity* of their *Proceedings*, and thence determine *impartially* for *themselves*.

Of all the fierce *Bigots*, and hypocritical *Zealots*, of the *religious* Kind, *none* are of a more *baneful* Nature, and consequently *merit* our *Attention* *more*, than the *bold*, *insinuating* *Romish* Missionaries; who, under the *Pretext* of serving *GOD*, craftily

that there are few of Mankind such *Idiots*, as to become their *Followers*." Sect. vii. p. 128. In point of *Knowledge*, and *Method* of writing, Mr. *Wesley* seems particularly *deficient*; as a Proof of his *Inability* that Way, see his *unmeaning* Letter to the *learned* Bishop of Gloucester, occasioned by his Lordship's Publication of a Tract, on the *Office* and *Operations* of the *Holy Spirit*.

impose

[t] impose upon Men. These old, insidious Enemies of our civil and christian Liberty, how often so ever repulsed, still renew their Attacks, and endeavour to corrupt what (thank God) they are unable to destroy. The Religion, which these People are so studious to propagate, is supported principally, by virtue of foolish Reliques, Intercessions of Saints, Masses for the Dead, &c. So that we may justly call its Doctrines *absurd*; its Rights *Paganish*; its Worship *idolatrous*: We may justly affirm, that it is a *System of Craft and Policy*, purposely contrived to enslave Mankind, calculated entirely for the Support of *Despotic Power*, and therefore totally *inconsistent* with the *Genius of a free People*. Yet that which makes it the *Scorn of Protestants*, whilst it is indeed the *Detestation of the whole World*, is that *tremendous Spirit of Cruelty* which is *inseparably* blended with, and which chiefly distinguishes the *Papal* from every other Government. Hence all those horrible *Massacres*, and *Persecutions*, of which we frequently [u] read. Hence, *Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer*, (those illustrious Champions of our Religion!) were *staked to the Ground*, and there, to the immortal Honor of *Popish Mildness and Moderation*, suffered the most cruel Torments human Power could possibly inflict.

It is unnecessary, therefore, for me to add how absolutely requisite it is, that you guard your various Flocks, against the vile Seductions of these *Popish Deluders*, who, if ever permitted once more to prevail, would produce in this Kingdom a train of the most horrid Consequences; Consequences, which would in the End

[t] The eloquent and pious Archbishop Tillotson says, "I have often wondered, why the People in the Church of Rome do not suspect their Teachers and Guides, to have some ill Design upon them, when they do so industriously debar them of the Means of Knowledge, and are so very loth to let them understand, what it is that we have to say against their Religion; for can any thing in the World be more suspicious, than to persuade them to put out their Eyes, upon promise that they will help them, to a much better and more faithful Guide? If any Church, any Profession of Men, be unwilling their Doctrines should be exposed to trial, it is a certain Sign, they know something by them that is faulty, and which will not endure the Light." Vol. I. p. 185.

[u] See Burnet's History of the Revolution, Vol. II. Part II. p. 318.

prove *subversive* of all true Religion, as well as of every thing else, that is *rational* and *virtuous* among Men.

To keep up a *due* Sense of the *indispensable* Obligations we are under, to *distinguish* ourselves, by a *just* Zeal against the *Popish* Interest, I know nothing *more* efficacious, than to *search* into their most *admired* Writers, and *there* to inspect the *fundamental* Principles of the Religion, or rather *Policy* of the See of Rome.

But having already *detained* you long, I shall now, in Conclusion, *briefly* address the *Laity*, and earnestly *exhort* them (by every Motive that can *touch* the *Hearts* of the *Wise* and *Good*) always to *act* in *exact* Conformity to the *Admirable* Precepts of the *Christian* Religion, and *carefully* to avoid the *Professed* Enemies and *Maligners* of it, who, *Proteus*-like, *assume* every *Shape* and *Form* to draw them *aside* from the *Living* God.

God has given *You* many *excellent* and *salutary* Laws, for the *Direction* of your *Conduct*, both as to your *temporal* and *spiritual* Concerns. He *requires*, therefore, that you *perform* his *Will*, by a *proper* Attention to *these* Laws. If you *despise* and *forlake* them, even the *wildest* Fanatic, or the most *deluded* Romanist, is a *Character* more amiable than *yours*; nay, if you *sin willfully* after that you *have* received the *Knowledge* of the *Truth*, better had it been for you, if you had been *born* in the most *remote* and *darkest* Corner of the Earth, where the *glad* Tidings of the Gospel have *never* yet been *heard* of.

Mankind, indeed, in every *Form* of Life, and in every *Degree* of Understanding are *prone* to *Evil*; yet if you *surpass* others in *Knowledge*, it may reasonably be expected, that you should also *surpass* them in *Virtue*. The *Vices* and *Immoralities* of professed Christians are *always* attended with the most *fatal* Consequences; nothing *tends* so much to the *Disparagement* of our Religion: do not therefore *neglect*, I beseech you, on *your* part, such Means as are in *your* Power to keep the *Cause* of *Truth*, of *Virtue*, and of *Religion* alive.

If you *retain* a just Sense of the *Great* Danger, which you run, by *transgressing* the Divine Commands, You will not *fail* to *frequent* this *sacred* Place, as you will *here* learn, how *gracious* your God is, and *how* much it is your *Duty* and your

Interest

Interest to obey him. Nor will you forget, (as you are bound in Justice and Gratitude) to pay a proper [w] Respect and Deference to the Ministers of his Holy Word and Sacraments, especially when you consider, that they have received their Commission from the highest and most venerable Power, from that which governs all Things, both in Heaven and on Earth. Separated from the vain and busy World, They have devoted their whole Lives to the Knowledge of such matters as transcend the vulgar Apprehension; such matters as cannot be acquired, but by the deepest Study and Contemplation. Ever ready therefore to dispense that Knowledge, and ever solicitous to make you think seriously of God and Eternity, they exert their noblest Faculties, they Teach, they Improve, they Correct, they Instruct.

A strict Observance of every Precept of Christianity, an exemplary Conquest over the Indulgencies and Vanities of the World, a resolute Zeal for the Honor, and an unwearied Devotion in the Service of God, are Doctrines, which naturally tend to promote a good Life.

The Christian Religion, indeed, discovers no Law but what is in every respect perfectly consistent with the Nature of the Divine Being, it propounds no point of Faith, but what you have the clearest Reasons to believe; it exacts no Duty, but what you have the strongest Motives to perform. Yet whether you will, or will not listen to the Divine Commands: Whether you will, or will not act the safest and most rational Part, depends not upon Us, but upon Yourselves. You are, and You must remain, free Agents.

Frequently have you been told, that the Comforts which flow from a true Sense of Religion, will prove your best Support in every Circumstance of Life; and that the loss of Them, will unavoidably be attended with the sharpest Misery. If therefore you are so obstinately and so foolishly perverse, as to neglect the Helps and Assistances which Religion alone can afford you; con-

[w] Μνημονεύετε τῶν ἡγαγμένων ὑμῶν, οἵτινες ἠδάλησαν ὑμῖν τὸ λόγον τῆς Θεᾶς.
Heb. c. xiii. ver. 7.

Πιθεσθε τοῖς ἡγαγμένοις ὑμῶν καὶ ὑπακούετε· αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀγγελοὶ ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν. ver. 17.

sider, I beseech you, what a sad Choice you make for yourselves.

By this neglect, you renounce and forfeit all Hopes of Happiness, both Temporal and Eternal. A Consideration this, which must assuredly give the deepest Concern and Affliction to every truly honest and careful Minister of CHRIST: Yet in such a Case as this (where our good Intentions are frustrated by your Omissions) the impending Calamity must fall upon your own Heads.

The Events of Things are not at our Disposal or Command. Natural Reason and Religion inform us upon what Terms we may hope to partake of God's Mercy, yet how many or how few will qualify themselves for the Mercy of God, it is not in the Power of natural Reason or Religion to discover. If therefore, you do not discharge all the Offices and Duties of Life, regularly and honourably, remember, that your Inadvertencies will not be imputed to us. No! our blessed Lord and Master will rather consider, what we have resolutely endeavoured, than what we have successfully performed. God knows and sees into the Goodness and Integrity of our Hearts, and will, we doubt not, reward us according to our Deserts: For tho' our Duty is hard, and our Strength small, yet I trust that (thro' the omnipotent Grace of the Almighty) we shall always be ready to do our Part, if you fail not on yours.

Innumerable are the Considerations which should prevail on you to act Righteously: You have, I may venture to say, the greatest Reasons to rejoice, that you bear the Name of Protestants; that you have been admitted into the Church of CHRIST JESUS, and have had the Means of Knowledge, and of Grace communicated to you.

Conduct Yourself, therefore, as Men and Christians ought to conduct Themselves. Cease to do Evil, resolve to do Good.

F I N I S.

